AFTER CHRISTMAS.

I have lately heard a secret;
Heard it, too, from truthful lips,
Santa Claus, the sly old fellow,
Makes his after-Christmas trips.

I've been told he has discovered
Many things that cause him pain;
Discontent and hateful envy—
Thoughtful love bestowed in vain.

He has seen his choicest presents
Torn, and broken, and defaced;
Santa Claus, though rich and lavish,
Frowns on wicked, wilful waste.

All unseen he watched some children
In their pleasant home, at play
With the very toys he gave them
On the merry Christmas day.

Johnny's horse was kicked and battered,
Just because it couldn't neigh!
Thought his papa might have bought him
Two live horses and a sleigh!

Katie wished her doll was larger,
Wished its eyes were black, not blue;
Finally grew vexed and threw it—
Broke its lovely head in two.

Santa Claus looked grave and troubled;
Shook his head and went away;
"I'll remember this," he muttered,
"On another Christmas day!"

Then he peered in dismal places
Where he was not wont to go;
Where the hungry, shivering children
Never any Christmas know.

And his heart was sad and sorry
That he could not help them all;
And he thought in grief and anger
Of the broken horse and doll.

As he took his onward journey,
He was seen to drop a tear,
And I'm certain that he whispered,
"I'll remember this next year!"

—*Hospital Review.*

ON THE LANDING.

An Idyl of the Balusters.

BOBBY, *ætat* 3½. JOHNNY, *ætat* 4½.

Bobby.

"Do you know why they've put us in that back room,
Up in the attic, close against the sky,
And made believe our nursery's a cloak-room?
Do you know why?"

Johnny.

"No more I don't, nor why that Sammy's mother
What Ma thinks horrid, 'cause he bunged my eye,
Eats an ice-cream, down there, like any other—
No more don't I!"

Bobby.

"Do you know why Nurse says it isn't manners
For you and me to ask folks twice for pie,
And no one hits that man with two bananas?
Do you know why?"

Johnny.

"No more I don't, nor why that girl, whose dress is
Off her shoulders, don't catch cold and die,
When you and me gets croup when we undresses!
No more don't I!"

Bobby.

"Perhaps she ain't as good as you and I is,
And God don't want her up in the sky,
And let's her live—to come in just when pie is—
Perhaps that's why!"

Johnny.

"Do you know why that man that's got a cropped head
Rubbed it just now as if he felt a fly?
Could it be, Bobby, something that I dropped?
And is that why?"

Bobby.

"Good boys behaves, and so they don't get scalded,
Nor drop hot milk on folks as they pass by."

Johnny [pionsly.]

"Marbles would bounce on Mr. Jones's bald head—
But *I* shan't try!"

Bobby.

"Do you know why Aunt Jane is always snarling
At you and me because we tells a lie,
And she don't slap that man that called her darling?
Do you know why?"

Johnny.

"No more I don't, nor why that man with Mamma
Just kissed her hand?"

Bobby.

"She hurt it—and that's why,
He made it well, the very way that Mamma
Does do to I."

Johnny.

"I feel so sleepy, * * * Was that Papa kissed us?
What made him sigh, and look up to the sky?"

Bobby.

"*We* wer'n't down-stairs, and he and God had missed us,
And that was why!"

—*Bret Harte, in New York Times.*

A NOVEL NEW YEAR'S GIFT.

"So you won't have me, Nellie? You are sure you won't marry me?"

Pretty little Mrs. Nellie Willard looked meditatively out of the window into the quiet village street, as if among the leafless trees and among the frost-bound landscape she could find the answer to Harry Levison's questions.

Then, after a moment, she turned her face toward him—a face as fresh and fair in its peachy bloom as many a young girl ten years her junior.

"I—I—am—afraid I can't, Mr. Levison."

Mr. Levison looked her straight in her blue eyes—such lovely blue eyes, soft as velvet, and the color of a violet that had bloomed in the shade.

"You are—'*afraid*'—you can't, Mrs. Willard? Answer me another question—yes—or no—do you love me?"

She blushed and smiled, and looked bewitchingly.

"Why, Mr. Levison, I mean Harry, of course I do—like you! I always did, ever since I first knew you, years and years ago."

"When Will Willard won the prize all we fellows were striving for! You liked me then, Nellie, and you like me now? Then why won't you marry me? You've been a widow for three years now. Isn't that long enough to mourn the virtues of the departed?"

"You wicked man! As if 300 years could ever teach me to forget poor, dear Wilson."

Her bright eye reproved him sharply, and he accepted with good grace.

"Granting the truth, Nellie, that your deceased husband was a good fellow and a loving partner, I still can not see why you refuse me. That is the subject under consideration at present, Nellie! *Why* won't you marry me?"

Then Mrs. Willard's face grew a little paler, and her plump, fair hands trembled.

"Because, Harry, because Wilson Willard, on New Year's day, made me promise never to marry again."

"Stuff and nonsense! What if he did. A bad promise is better broken than kept."

Mrs. Willard twisted her ring uneasily, and looked at the illuminated shield of the stone.

"I know it is," she said, slowly, "but—"

Mr. Levison looked earnestly at her.

"Yes—'but' what, Nellie? In all respect I say it—poor Will is dead and gone; and you have been true to hi memory, all these long years, and whas has he to do with you now?"

"I know," she said meditative "but—but, Harry, he made me solemnly promise never to marry again under penalty of his everlasting displeasure. And—don't be angry with me, Harry, will you? But I almost *know* he would appear to me!"

The lovely blue eyes were lifted in such piteous appeal to his, and the pretty little widow made such a nervous little move nearer to him, that it was the most human thing in the world for Mr. Levison to put his arm protectingly around her and assure her he was not angry with her.

"So you believe he would haunt you, Nellie, if you broke your promise? A sensible little woman like you to veritably believe in such superstitious folderol! And, after having waited for you ten years of your married-life, and three years of your widowhood, you condemn me to hopelessness for the sake of such a chimera—for the sake of such a shadow as your husband's ghost!"

And Nellie looked imploringly at him again, and her lips quivered, and the tears stood in great crystals on her long lashes.

"Oh, Harry, how cruel you are! You *know* I love you better than all the world, only—I dare not marry again! *Don't* be angry—please don't be angry with me!"

And Mr. Levison looked down at her lovely face, and assured her he never could be angry with her, and then went away heaping maledictions on the head of the defunct husband who had been tyrant enough to burden his young wife with such a promise.

The last sunset rays were flinging their golden and scarlet pennons on the pale, blue-gray sky, when Mr. Levison opened the door of his cozy sitting-room at home, to be met by the laughing face and gay welcome of a young gentleman, who had evidently been making himself at home while he waited.

"Heigho, Levison! Surprised to see me? How are you, old fellow—how are you?"

Mr. Levison stared a second, then greeted him warmly.

"Fred Willard! Where in the name of goodness did you spring from? Why, I thought you were not to sail from England for a long six months yet. Old boy, bless you, I'm glad to see you, although for the instant I confess I was startled—you are the living image of your brother Wilson. We've been discussing ghosts, you know—"

Young Willard's eyes gleamed mischievously, as he interrupted irreverently:

"'*We*' is good, Lev. You mean my pretty little sister-in-law, of course. I know she religiously believes in 'em. I know I am impatient to see her—for the first time since Will's funeral!"

Mr. Levison had been looking thoughtfully at the embers glowing, like melted rubies, behind the silver bars of the grate; now he turned suddenly to Fred, and laid his hand persuasively on his shoulder.

"See here, Fred; you are a friend of mine, and I am about to put your friendship to the test. I want you to do me a very great favor; will you?"

Fred laughed.

"Will I? Of course I will. What's up?"

And Mr. Levison turned the keys of the doors, and the consultation lasted until the housekeeper rang the dinner-bell.

Five hours later the moon was just creeping over the tops of the trees, making a perfect flood of silver-gold glory on the quiet scene, and Mrs. Willard, with a fleecy-white zephyr shawl and her *crepe* brown hair, was standing at the kitchen door, on her return from a tour of inspection to the snug little barn and carriage-house, which she had personally seen was secure for the night, ever since her husband's death.

Her cheeks were flushed to the tint of an oleander flower by the keen kiss of the frosty air, and her eyes were glowing like blue fires as she stood there one moment in the broad band of white moonlight that lay athwart the floor like a silent blessing. Then, with a little involuntary exclamation at the perfect beauty of the night, she went in, locked the door after her, for her three servants were all retired for the night, and then gave a little shriek, for standing in the self-same accustomed place he was wont to occupy, and looking as natural as if it were himself in the flesh, was her husband. She stifled her shriek, and tried bravely to feel brave, but her heart was tearing around very undisciplinedly as she realized that she was looking upon a bona-fide ghost—a veritable inhabitant of the land of eternal shadows.

"Will!" she said, faintly, with her hand tight on the handle of the door, "Will, is it you?"

His voice was precisely as it had been in the old days—mellow, musical, a little domineering—Will's undeniably, unmistakably.

"Who should it be but I, Nellie, and come on purpose to communicate with you."

"Yes?" she gasped, "but what for? I have tried—I have done every thing that I thought you could wish. There is nothing wrong, Will?"

The pale, moon-lighted face, the speckless black suit, the spotless linen, the very same in which he had been buried, the low, familiar voice—it almost paralyzed Nellie, and yet, aided by the very material contact of the door-knob, she stood her ground and listened.

"Nothing wrong with you, Nellie, but with me. I come to bring you a New Year's present."

Nellie was startled, and looked at him curiously, wondering what he had brought from the other world.

"I present you" he said, "with your liberty, for I can't rest in my grave knowing the wrong I unintentionally committed in binding you to perpetual widowhood for my sake. I come to revoke my decision—to give you my full permission to marry again, and my advice to marry Horace Levison. Promise me you'll do it, and I will rest peacefully forever."

"Oh, Will!—if you will say so—if you think it best—yes!—yes, I will!"

Her face was pale enough now to have passed for a ghost herself.

"Go look at his big clock in the dining-room, Nellie, and see if it is near the stroke of twelve."

She went dumbly, mechanically, at his behest; and, when she came back, he was gone, and the moonlight streamed in on an empty room.

Then the reaction followed, and Nellie flew up to her bed-room and locked the door, and covered her head with a shawl, and sobbed and cried hysterically, until her over-wrought nerves found relief in sleep.

The next day Mr. Levison sent a little note over, apologizing for his seeming discourtesy in not coming to bid her good-by on his sudden departure for an indefinite time, and telling her that her cruel decision never to marry again had been the cause of it, and that they might never meet again, etc., etc.

To which Nellie, all pale, alarmed and crimson with confusion, penciled an answer, assuring him she had changed her mind, and begging him to come over to lunch, to see her, and meet her brother-in-law, who had only just arrived from abroad.

Of course Mr. Levison came, and it didn't take two minutes to settle it, nor did he laugh at her when she suddenly related her experience of the night before.

"For it was his ghost, Harry, just as true as I am alive and speaking to you!"

"A jolly old—I mean a thoughtful, painstaking spirit, Nellie. Bless his ghostship, we'll hold him in eternal remembrance."

Nor did his countenance change a feature, even when he and Nellie and Fred Willard discussed the marvelously obliging kindness of the departed.

Nor did pretty, blooming, blushing Mrs. Nellie ever for a moment dream that her visitant was Fred himself, assisted by a wig and false whiskers—nor was there any need she should know, for her happiness was secured, her conscience at ease.

The Girls of Sligo.

The girls of Sligo were not exactly pretty, and not quite the reverse. They were fresh, wholesome, and hearty-looking—broad-shouldered and ruddy-faced, by no means to be passed by with coldness or indifference. It may, indeed, be said that the heart of the traveler of whom we have thus far been speaking, warmed towards them, and he watched them with no little interest going in and out of the shops making their purchases, for it was Saturday evening and market day. Their bonnets would have made the Queen of Sheba green with envy—bonnets of great height, a foot at least, towering up above the head like a main-sail, and bedecked with ribbons of red, yellow and other quiet colors. Some of these ribbons were white, like a bride's, and great was the contrast between the covering of the head and the rest of the attire. The taste of the Irish peasant girl does not seem to run much to bonnets as a general rule, but when it does she makes up her mind that there shall be no mistake about it.—*The London Week.*

The Popular 4-per-cent Loan.

The Secretary of the Treasury has issued a circular calling renewed attention to the issue of 4-per-cent. bonds. They are issued in denominations of $50 and upward, both coupon and registered, and bear 4-per-cent. interest, payable quarterly. They are exempt from payment of taxes or duties to the United States, as well as from taxation in any form by or under State, municipal or local authority. Upon receipt of full payment the bonds will be transmitted free of charge to subscribers. Applications should specify the amount and denomination required, and, for registered bonds, the full name and post-office address of the person to whom the bonds shall be made payable. The interest on registered bonds will be paid by a check issued by the Treasury of the United States to the order of the holder, and mailed to his address. The check is payable on presentation, properly indorsed at the office of the Assistant Treasurer of the United States in New York in coin or United States notes, as the holder may prefer, or, if desired, in United States notes at the office of the Treasurer or any Assistant Treasurer of the United States. All National banks are invited to become financial agents of the Government and depositories of public moneys received on the sale of these bonds. Upon complying with section 5,153, Revised Statutes of the United States, all banks, bankers, paymasters and other public officers and other persons are invited to aid in placing these bonds. They can make their arragements through National banks for the deposit of the purchase money of the bonds.

M. Quad on "Going to School."

I expected to hear from Mr. Old Fogy again, and was therefore not surprised at his ring the other evening. He brought along one of his pupils, a lad of 12, and there was a sly twinkle in Mr. Old Fogy's eye as he rubbed his hands before the fire.

"I want to show you that you are all wrong," he said, as he sat down, "and I have therefore brought James along. You can ask him any questions you see fit. Perhaps you'd better test him in geography a little."

"James, what are the principal products of Louisiana?" I asked.

"Sugar, molasses, cotton and rice," he promptly answered.

"How do we get sugar? What is it before it is sugar?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Does rice grow on trees, or how?"

"On trees, I guess."

"What is molasses, James?"

"It is sweet stuff, sir."

"How does cotton grow!"

"I don't know—we never had that."

"What are exports?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Why do you ask him such questions?" put in Mr. Old Fogy, getting irritated right away.

"Simply to see if you have really taught him any thing. You have been teaching him for several years, and yet he can't tell whether molasses is dug out of a hill or picked from an old knot-hole. When you first mentioned the name Louisiana to him you could have explained all the rest in two minutes. Now James, what is our system of government!"

"Republican, sir."

"And what is that of Russia?"

"Monarchial, sir."

"Very well; what is the difference between them? Name any one point?"

"It is awful cold in Russia!" answered the boy after a long wait.

"That isn't fair—indeed it isn't!" exclaimed Mr. Old Fogy as he rose up.

"Isn't it? You have, as a teacher, asked these same questions week after week for twenty years, and yet never explained a single point. The boy now believes that the weather makes the difference between a free government and a despotism, and he'll keep on believing until some one outside of school enlightens him. Now, James, take this slate and pencil and draw me a cape."

"Why, how singular!" growled Mr. Old Fogy?

"Yes, very," I replied as James gave it up. "For years this boy has been told that a cape is a point of land projecting into the water, and yet he can't mark out one! Well, does he know any thing about arithmetic?"

"He can do any sum in the first half of the book, sir."

"Can, eh? James, if you kept store, and a woman bought ten yards of dress goods at forty cents per yard, but returned the goods and wanted factory at five cents per yard, how many yards would you give her?"

James figured. He bit his pencil and figured again. He pushed out his tongue, wet his pencil and finally replied:

"Well, you see, sir, I never kept store, and so I can't tell."

"Very singular very singular!" growled Mr. Old Fogy.

"So it is. Now let me hear him read."

James took the school-reader and began:

"A farmer whose poultry-yard had suffered severely from the foxes, succeeded at last in catching one," etc.

"Is your book right side up, James?"

"Yes, sir."

"And your eyes on the lines?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, now, wait a moment."

Half a dozen children were playing up stairs, and calling them down I selected a girl 8 years old, handed her the book, and said:

"Now, Lily, turn the book upside down and read us about the farmer and the fox."

She held the book away and repeated a whole page without hesitation.

"You see, Mr. Old Fogy, your boy has read that article and heard it read a hundred times. It was long ago monotonous to him. He simply repeats it parrot-like, and his mind is not a whit interested, as it would be if he read something new and different every day. Now, I'll show you how I would teach school. Children, stand here in a row, and all answer together. If I ship goods into any other country what are they called?"

"Exports, sir."

"If I buy goods of any other country?"

"Imports, sir."

"Now, Henry, I give you the word 'iron.'"

"Iron, sir," he began, "is dug from the earth in the form of ore. It is melted, purified, and then used in the manufacture of thousands of articles. Iron ore is found in several States in the Union, and in many countries across the oceans. Without iron we could have no railroads, steamboats, street-cars or machinery."

"What book did he learn that from?" asked Mr. Old Fogy.

"From none. Two weeks ago I showed him a piece of iron ore and explained what he now knows as well as you or I. He isn't ten years old yet and he can hardly read at all. Now, little Susan, here is a newspaper."

"Yes, sir. In the first place the paper is made of rags or straw or wood. Then men called printers arrange metal letters into words and words into lines, and when there are enough to fill the paper it is printed on what is called a press."

"Singular—very singular," coughed Mr. Old Fogy.

"Is it? Your 12-year-old pupil couldn't have explained a single point. I have repeated that twice to this 6-year-old child and she is as well posted as you are. Let me ask your pupil what a conjunction is."

"A word connecting two other words, sir."

"Yes; and now write me an example."

He took the pencil and wrote: "Detroit, Michigan, 1878."

"Your pupil, Mr. Old Fogy has answered my question a hundred times, and you see how he fails when he comes to practice. Now, children, I write, 'Horses and dogs,' and please tell me which word is a conjunction?"

"And!" they cried in chorus.

"I gave them a like lesson last night for the first time, Mr. Old Fogy, while your pupil has had it for years. You have taught him the theory—I have given him the practice. If I were a teacher I'd lock up every book and begin on the plaster on the walls and instruct them in the useful of every day life."

"Plaster!" he gasped.

"Yes, I'd take that as the very foundation. Can you, Mr. Old Fogy, old as you are, tell me how plaster for lath work is mixed?

"I—won't be talked to in this way, sir!" he exclaimed, as he rose to go.

We are sending our children to school to learn theory. They look through glass windows, and yet have no idea what glass is. Brick walls inclose them, and they have no idea how bricks are made. Coal furnaces warm their rooms, but they know nothing of coal. It snows or rains or blows, and no one explains the interesting lesson of atmospheric changes. They have beautiful lessons in the engravings of their books, but they see nothing but the pictures. They read print, but know nothing of its value to the world. Then, when our boys come home, and wonder why frost heaves a post out of the ground or a board warps in the sun, we turn around and say:

"Why, you mutton-head, haven't I sent you to school for ten years?"

How Chance Made a Marine Picture

The frost-work representations on the window-pane, of trees, castles, landscapes, and common scenes—familiar phenomena as they are—always excite wonder, and often cause one to ponder on the mysterious chance which makes these pictures in the regular outline of a careful design. But the ephemeral frost is not the only material employed by the unseen artist, as witness a marine view on wood which can be seen at Mr. Calvin Hervey's jewelry store. It looks like an old oil painting; no one would for a moment suppose that it was a chance picture, but such it really is. It was discovered recently by Mr. Hervey when he had the partitions removed from a drawer which he has used to keep tools in for twenty-five years. The scratching of the implements as they rattled around in the drawer, the action of the oil which mingled with the rust turned green, the dust and grime of a quarter of a century, all had combined to paint on these pine board partitions a tolerable good sketch, in dull colors, of the ocean with three vessels sailing on its bosom, and in the distance a headland with a light-house. Mr. Hervey has had the picture framed in gilt, and it hangs over his repairing bench, ready for the close inspection of doubting Thomases, or any one else.—*Belfast (Me.) Age.*

A Trick of Heller's.

A correspondent of the Cincinnati *Commercial* tells the following story of Robert Heller's skill in sleight-of-hand tricks: "Lager-beer was the leading beverage in the Cincinnati Sketch Club. One day there were gathered some 70 gentlemen—artists, ministers, doctors, poets, musicians, men of letters, in fact, all professions were represented—when Heller announced the fact that he would make disappear a full glass of lager, not by the usual method—that was, that he would make disappear this glass and the beer, and it would be found in the rear pocket of some one of those present, and he would be unaware of its presence. A moment! It was not in Heller's hands, and where had it gone? Every eye was intent on Heller, and crowding closely around the performer. Mr. Samuel N. Pike, who was languidly leaning against the mantel-shelf, smoking, and quite unconcerned, some 20 feet away, put his hand in his coat-pocket (as we all did, not knowing but that each was the victim) and withdrew it hurriedly, dripping with beer. The veritable glass, half full of the frothing fluid was in his pocket."

A Singular Animal.

For some years there has been in the Hadley neighborhood a wild vermin which has been a terror to the people of that community. Last Sunday morning Esquire James Heard went to his hog-pen, where he found and killed it. It has been heard in that section to cry like a young mule, but when it was shot it made a noise like that of a fox. It is 20 inches high, 3 feet 2 inches from end of tail to the tip of his nose, and looks like a cross between a wolf, fox, dog and coon; has a thick, heavy neck like a bull, is of a pale yellow color, with long hair on his neck, which curls back somewhat like the mane of a lion, and other features not common to animals of these woods. What is strange about it is that the hounds would not chase nor have any thing to do with it. It was in good order, and from its being in the hog-pen it is supposed that it had been for a long time feeding on the swine of the neighborhood.—*Bowling Green Pantagraph.*